Osaka Human Sciences, **6**, 67-89
March 2020

THE PROCESS OF MUTUAL TRANSFORMATION AFFECTING AN INTERNATIONAL/ETHNIC SCHOOL AND JAPANESE PUBLIC SCHOOLS WITHIN A SHARED LOCAL COMMUNITY: A FOCUS ON EDUCATIONAL PRACTICES IN THE CONTACT ZONE

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Abstract

This paper describes the process of mutual transformation operating between a gaikokujin-gakko (international/ethnic school) and Japanese public schools within a shared local community, focusing on the educational practices that have emerged due to their contact. It also presents, from a micro–local perspective unexplored by previous studies, a new perspective on the concept of gaikokujin-gakko and possible means of supporting these schools grounded in the realities of the local area. As specific cases, the study focused on a newly established Korean gaikokujin-gakko, School T, and three public schools (two elementary schools, one middle school) in the same school district; their contact with one another is examined through the lens of the "contact zone" concept.

The paper discusses the study's three main findings. First, encounters between School T and the district's public schools occurred in circumstances of asymmetrical power relations, but both sides were subjectivized and entered an exchange as they began to reconsider existing practices. Second, various developments were observed as contact continued: such as transformations in classroom practices and the parties involved, new conflicts with strengthened partnerships as a result, and the creation and implementation of a high school entrance system. Third, a local district educational organization that stressed the empowerment of socially disadvantaged groups and the proactivity of School T in building relationships with the local community, through determination to achieve the school's educational ideas despite facing structural disadvantages, were both important contributing factors.

These findings reveal that, although constrained by their environment and inherent structural limitations, neither the gaikokujin-gakko nor the district's public schools showed a purely passive reaction to problems, but instead, extensively expanded their educational practices as they reconsidered existing practices and came to consider each other as educational resources.

This paper concludes with academic and policy suggestions based on the above.

Key words: gaikokujin-gakko (International/Ethnic school), local community, contact zone, interschool collaboration

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This article is the English translation of the original one "Saki Kinnan (2016). The Process of Mutual Transformation Affecting an International/Ethnic School and Japanese Public Schools Within a Shared Local Community: A Focus on Educational Practices in the Contact Zone. *The Journal of Educational Sociology,* **98**, 113-133 (in Japanese)". The publication of its English translation has been permitted by the Japan Society of Educational Sociology.

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1. Problem Site

This paper describes a study of the process of mutual transformation operating between a "gaikokujin-gakko" (international/ethnic school) and Japanese public schools within a shared local community, focusing on the educational practices that emerged due to their contact. It also presents, from a micro–local perspective unexplored by previous studies, a new perspective on the concept of gaikokujin-gakkos and possible means of supporting these schools grounded in the realities of the local area.

Japan's increasingly diverse local communities comprise people of different ethnicities and cultures encountered in the course of everyday life; experiences of "everyday multiculturalism" (Wise, 2009) involving communication in the service of coexistence amid repeated confrontation and negotiation are becoming more common (Shiobara, 2012). The influx and permanent settling of long-term migrants since the 1990s heralded this trend and triggered a growing body of wide-ranging research into education and the developing multiculturalism of local communities (e.g., Kojima, 2006; Onai & Sakai, 2001; Shimizu, 2006; and others). However, this research has tended to be dominated by discussions of multiethnic families and the educational issues faced by their children in Japan's public schools (Miura, 2012). Likewise, research on the subject of local community and education, in which relationships between schools and communities have been a major theme, has stagnated since the 1980s in Japan (Takada, 2008), when it almost uniformly comprised discussions of Japanese public schools (Okazaki & Natsuaki, 2012; and others).

However, educational bodies in local communities are not limited to Japanese public schools. This paper focuses on the "gaikokujin-gakko," a generic term for "a school run chiefly for children with foreign citizenship and implementing an independent curriculum" (*IO Monthly Magazine,* 2006, p. 5); approximately 200 schools, old and new, met this definition in Japan in 2013. Although the body of research remains small, it has been gradually expanding since the mid-2000s as focus has turned toward the widening variety of school types to accommodate the rise in numbers of children from varied backgrounds (e.g., different countries of origin and details of residence in Japan) and to examinations of the changing policies surrounding such issues as removing high school fees and establishing the legal category of "miscellaneous school" (Shimizu, Takada, Horike, & Yamamoto, 2014, p. 152).

Hitherto, discussions asserting the necessity of supporting gaikokujin-gakkos and emphasizing the exclusionary nature of the surrounding Japanese society, primarily from the macro legal perspective, have dominated studies on the subject (Han, 2015; Tanaka, 2011; and others). While highlighting the need to improve the status and rights of gaikokujin-gakkos and support the children who study there is of obvious importance, studies from this kind of macro perspective that have interrogated the social structure on the basis of a schema that indicates a majority versus a minority portray gaikokujin-gakkos as vulnerable yet tend to overlook their

subjective behavior. This unintentionally leads to a paternalism that favors gaikokujin-gakkos with "aid" as socially disadvantaged entities; the resulting adverse response—"the Japanese government should prioritize support for Japanese over support for foreigners"—may in turn undermine the legitimacy of the schools' empowerment (Shiobara, 2011). Furthermore, this majority–minority framework tends to reduce the situation to a binary and, importantly, static relationship, with the "changing" gaikokujin-gakkos positioned outside the educational system of the "changeless" Japanese society (Yabuta, Shibano, Yamamoto, & Shikita, 2014, p. 48). This prevents researchers from fully capturing the reality of mutual transformation that may be observed from a micro perspective.

Shimizu, Nakajima, and Kaji have conducted research (2014) based on the above points, focusing on the perspectives of those involved in gaikokujin-gakkos and their subjective behavior. Their study positioned gaikokujin-gakkos at the intersection of home-education strategies and schools' management strategies and reconsidered the educational possibilities of gaikokujin-gakkos through an exploration of each school and the associated people's various realities. However, even that pioneering study, drawing on this changed perspective, was limited to an approach that centered discussions on the "school" framework and did not expand its empirical research to relationships with communities. This was a serious limitation, as schools exist in connection, in varying degrees, with the outside environments in which they operate, which entails various contacts through students and educational practices with school districts' educational organizations, including nearby Japanese public schools, despite a backdrop of power differentials. Thus, the aspect hitherto overlooked in the related fields of gaikokujin-gakko research and research into community and education is this consideration of these gaikokujin-gakkos as local schools.

It is important to reconsider gaikokujin-gakkos as local schools to examine the reciprocal influence that they and their communities exert over one another and to reveal the roles played and possibilities provided by gaikokujin-gakkos in local community formation. This leads naturally to negative attitudes surrounding gaikokujin-gakkos and criticisms that the related legal systems have been formed without consideration of local realities (as evidenced by recent government policies that determine the recipients of funding for free high school education according to international relations). The reconsideration of gaikokujin-gakkos as local schools necessitates discussions of potential means of support based on the realities of local areas, rather than only the macro approach of improvements to the legal system previously put forward. Based on the above, this study focused on contacts between a gaikokujin-gakko and Japanese public schools as seen within a local community, and this paper represents the process of mutual transformation found to occur between them.

2. Analytical Framework

This paper describes the process of mutual transformation occurring between a gaikokujin-gakko and Japanese public schools with reference to "contact zones" (Pratt, 1992). A *contact zone* designates "the space in which peoples geographically and historically separated come into contact with each other and establish ongoing relations" (Pratt, 1992, p. 4). The concept should be viewed as a perspective from which to understand contact between people rather than one from which to interrogate the characteristics of the place itself (Tanaka, 2007, p. 39).

As a guiding principle, this study, which focused on the *process* of mutual transformation between a gaikokujin-gakko and Japanese public schools, used Suzuki's classification of the fundamental nature of the contact zone as a process of "contact–reconsideration–transformation" (2013, p. 127). According to Suzuki, a contact zone is a place where people of multiple heterogeneous cultures come into contact, resulting in connections among people with different ways of feeling, thinking, and behaving. However, these meetings (the "contact" part of the process) among cultures do not always occur on an equal footing but can involve unbalanced power relations. Nevertheless, people do not simply enter fixed relationships of controller–controlled but are subjectivized (viewed in relation to others) as they influence one another (the "reconsideration" step). Amid this continued contact and negotiation, neither culture constructs a self-sufficient, closed system; both accept the inroads made by the other and establish forms that subsume those incursions. Further, the cultural practices taking place in these spaces must necessarily negotiate among their various cultural codes and, as they are thus exposed to the indeterminacy of inconstant meaning, take on a certain political character in the struggles surrounding cultural legitimacy (the "transformation" stage).

As indicated by the fundamental characteristics described above, the contact zone is predicated on a multilayered structure involving people from many different cultural backgrounds. People in asymmetrical relationships in this place of contact mutually transform as they exert influence on one another through bilateral negotiations. However, this process of transformation cannot be described in only positive terms. The diverse practices in these spaces take shape amid conflicts that arise based on entanglements and power contests among the multiple cultures. The significance of using the concept of the contact zone becomes clear when examining exchange, negotiation, and subject formation in this way, predicated on fluid relationships and with consideration of the influence exerted on both the dominant and subordinate sides by people in contact (Fujiwara, 2011; Ishihara, Kina, & Yamashiro, 2010). Thus characterized, the contact zone concept was a valuable theory for this study, which examined the exposure to and interaction with multiple asymmetrical subjects from different cultural backgrounds (namely, a gaikokujin-gakko and Japanese public schools) and sought to understand their mutual transformation.

3. Survey Summary

This study surveyed School T, a recently established Korean gaikokujin-gakko, and two public elementary schools and one public middle school (Blue Elementary, Green Elementary, and Brown Middle School) located in the same middle school district as School T (District Y, Prefecture A). School T was chosen because, as a newly established gaikokujin-gakko, its effect in and on the community would be more readily observed than that of a long-established gaikokujin-gakko and because contact and exchange with the district's public schools and inhabitants has occurred continually in various settings since its opening, presenting an opportunity to easily study the process of mutual transformation.

School T is a Korean gaikokujin-gakko founded as a private school in 2008 and recognized as a "miscellaneous school" in March 2011 by Japanese government. It has the features of international schools, so its educational system was not modeled on that of any specific country, and nationality and ethnicity are not requirement for admission. In 2015, eight years after its founding, the number of students in its middle and high school sections totaled 95 and included a variety of nationalities; besides Japanese and Korean students, there were a few Chinese nationals, and one former student had dual German and Japanese citizenship. Recent deteriorations in relations between Japan and South Korea, minimal increases in student numbers, and financial difficulties arising from its status as a miscellaneous school were current issues of concern.

School T is located in Ward X, a moderate-sized former "burakumin area" of approximately 800 households; "burakumin areas" were districts home to members of Japan's "lower-caste" *burakumin* community, so designated by Special Measures Law for Regional Improvement Projects, identifying them as the targets of measures to improve living conditions and social assimilation. Since the Special Measures Law for Regional Improvement Projects expired in 2002, various local operations suffered cutbacks and stagnation, with an accompanying decline in educational attainment. Ward X is a location with mostly public housing and significant provision of accommodations for low-income individuals. It is becoming progressively multicultural and has an increasingly mixed population of old and new inhabitants; for example, there have been recent establishments of minority religious spaces (e.g., mosques) and an exodus of financially secure groups being replaced by an influx of people in socially disadvantaged situations—including financially insecure groups and foreign nationals planning to remain in Japan over the long-term—seeking affordable property, available housing, and ease of living.

Ward X falls inside the Middle School District Y, which includes the public elementary and middle schools (Blue Elementary, Green Elementary, and Brown Middle School) surveyed in this study. Blue Elementary and Brown Middle School were designated pilot schools for "Dowa education" (education to eliminate discrimination against *burakumin*) and still accept students

from former burakumin areas. As many of their students face economic and social difficulties, importance is attached to providing additional teachers and human rights education. The catchment area for Green Elementary School covers multiple housing complexes, including prefecture-managed housing that is home to many foreign nationals; the school is, therefore, characterized by a high proportion of students receiving financial support to attend school and of children of newcomers and long-term migrants who maintain connections to their countries of origin.

Middle School District Y has a district-wide history of having provided Human rights and Dowa education since the 1970s, and this long-term activity has developed a multilayered educational network among schools, communities, and households, as well as interschool networks from kindergarten to high school. Activities that actively connect these parties and create the interschool connections mentioned above continue today to stimulate cooperation, based on the theoretical framework of the "educational community" (Ikeda, 2005), primarily through the "Community Education Councils" that were established in all middle school districts throughout the prefecture (barring one city) in 2000. The council in Middle School District Y is known as "Y Net," and Blue Elementary, Green Elementary, and Brown Middle School play central roles as offices for its activities.

The contacts made, in various forms, by School T with Ward X and Middle School District Y since the school's opening will be discussed in detail in the next section. The relationships between School T and Ward X (chiefly with local inhabitants, religious spaces, welfare institutions, and human rights organizations, but including others) and between School T and Middle School District Y (chiefly with the two elementary schools and one middle school listed above) presented a significant degree of overlap, such that it is difficult to discuss them in strict isolation. Having recognized this, this study sought to describe the process of mutual transformation emerging around education. Due to space constraints, this paper focuses only on the relationship between School T and the three public schools in Middle School District Y, but the author hopes to describe the process of mutual transformation between School T and all of Ward X in a future paper.

The data for this paper were gathered by the author through participant observation during various events and gatherings at School T and in Middle School District Y between April 2013 and January 2016, as well as from interviews conducted between March 2014 and December 2015 with ten members (total) of the teaching staff at School T and in Middle School District Y (Table 1). The participants were principal teaching staff who understood, to varying degrees, the past and then-current relationships between School T and the three aforementioned public schools and who were, or had been, involved in exchanges between them. Semi-structured interviews of an average of one and a half hours were conducted with the participants between one and four times. All names have been changed. Additions, omissions, remarks made by the author are indicated, respectively, with parentheses, ellipses, and square brackets.

Table 1. *Interview Participants* (as of December 2015)

Name*	Age	Sex	Ethnicity	Affiliation	Years in Post
Min	50s	M	South Korean	School T	6
Sim	50s	M	South Korean; permanent resident in Japan	School T	7
Won	50s	M	South Korean; permanent resident in Japan	School T	6
Kasai	60s	F	Japanese	Blue Elementary	13
Andō	30s	M	Japanese	Blue Elementary	7
Ōta	40s	M	Japanese	Blue Elementary	9
Matsuda	40s	M	Japanese	Green Elementary	6 (until 2013)
Fujisawa	20s	M	Japanese	Green Elementary	3
Nakano	50s	M	Japanese	Brown Middle School	17
Nomoto	30s	M	Japanese	Brown Middle School	10

Notes: All names are pseudonyms.

4. The "Process of Mutual Transformation" Occurring in the Contact Zone

This paper describes the process of mutual transformation occurring between School T and the public schools of Middle School District Y according to Suzuki (2013)'s aforementioned framing of the contact zone as "contact–reconsideration–transformation".

4.1. Contact

The establishment of School T provided the community with a new contact zone: a space in which people of multiple cultures met in circumstances of asymmetrical power relations and engaged in bilateral negotiations.

In the summer of 2007, School T selected an open plot in Ward X as the site of its school buildings, and construction began with the goal of opening the following year. However, shortly after work commenced, the school was confronted with a protest movement mounted by a subset of Ward X residents. Signboards and banners were placed in front of the planned construction site, and those opposing the construction carried out sit-in protests blocking construction vehicles. Although a total of five community briefings about the school's construction and opening were then held over a period of six months, these provided no solutions that mollified the opposition movement or reached any compromises, and continued construction became difficult. There followed a series of disputes that proceeded to court, which ruled that the opposition of the residents was unreasonable.

Nevertheless, the movement opposing School T's construction had lasting effects despite the court's resolution; Japanese children in the area internalized discriminatory attitudes toward Korean Peninsula in general and School T in particular. Many of the children attending Blue Elementary from Ward X (where School T is located) harbored prejudices, having been brought up in families who witnessed or participated in the protests. In this respect, the

effects of the "contact" produced by the establishment of School T clearly extended beyond the boundaries of the ward. Ward X is also home to many of the children who attend Blue Elementary and Brown Middle School, and it has long been an important area for the public schools of Middle School District Y in terms of cooperation with households and the study of community and human rights, among other issues. In these ways, the newly formed contact zone produced by the appearance of School T extended beyond the obvious contact with Ward X into Middle School District Y.

4.2. Reconsideration

In contact zones, people meet in circumstances of asymmetrical power relations, but these relationships are not fixed. Both School T and the district's public schools were subjectivized under one another's influence via contact and formed new behaviors as they reconsidered previous practices. In fall of 2008, concerned by the discriminatory attitudes toward School T and Korean Peninsula that students continued to absorb from surrounding adults, staff at Blue Elementary approached School T to propose an exchange, shortly after School T's opening. A teacher at Blue Elementary had this to say:

> It was the Blue Elementary side [who approached School T to propose an exchange]. We did it because meetings between the children were in no way positive. A protest movement started in the "village" [a former burakumin area within the school district] when School T was set up and the children were growing up seeing and hearing all kinds of prejudices and things. We couldn't just let things go on like that.
>
> —Kasai, Blue Elementary teacher

Another teacher at Blue Elementary concurred:

> In the end, I think the [Blue Elementary] school's viewpoint was that surely [the children] have to see each other face to face, come into contact with one another, talk to one another.… So we had a session that our kids introduced our school to them and T-school introduced themselves to us. We did those kind of activities in the first year.
>
> —Andō, Blue Elementary teacher

Kasai of Blue Elementary stated that encounters between children from Blue Elementary and children from School T "were in no way positive." As they traveled to school or when they had gone home to play, many children had seen dozens of people participating in the sit-in protests against School T's construction, and they had grown up seeing and hearing the prejudiced views of these vocal Japanese adults. Blue Elementary regarded the adults' influence over the children in the community as its own educational issue, and spokespeople

approached School T to propose an exchange to establish opportunities for direct meetings to reach the children.

Similarly, Green Elementary proposed an exchange with School T in 2009, a year after the latter opened. One teacher at Green Elementary who played a key role in this recalled how it began:

> [The exchange began] because I was head of "the department of Human Rights" [the official school position of "Human Rights and Dowa Education Leader"]. And because one of the central tenets of Green Elementary's human rights education is "multicultural coexistence," I had always thought that we couldn't walk away from School T, our neighbors.… "Multicultural Coexistence education"…means allowing exchange.… From daycare and kindergarten, children at Green Elementary are around children with connections to countries all over the world as a matter of course, so they don't have prejudices against foreign countries or children of foreign nationals in Japan.… Seeing as these children had School T as a neighbor, I thought their horizons would grow even further if I continued to promote an exchange.
>
> —Matsuda, Green Elementary teacher

As Green Elementary's catchment area includes several city-run housing complexes and is home to many financially insecure individuals and foreign nationals, many students from disadvantaged socioeconomic backgrounds and of foreign origin were enrolled there. Thus, Matsuda reported, starting the exchange with School T was intended to further cultivate the sensitivities and abilities of children who were already familiar with this multicultural environment.

It was not only the local schools who acted. School T responded directly to the opposition campaign. When the protest campaign began in 2007, the school distributed letters to every house in Ward X, calling for understanding and cooperation regarding the construction of the school. The following excerpt comes from this document:

> In accordance with our educational ideals of multicultural coexistence, human rights, and peace, [School T] will raise the future talent of our next generation to consider how people of different nationalities, ethnicities, religions, values, and other backgrounds may coexist, and to be able to put these solutions into practice.… We earnestly hope that, going forward, local children and the children of School T will be able to use a variety of opportunities to engage with one another more deeply…and we at School T will determinedly pursue a better relationship with the local community with open hearts and minds.
>
> (School T, "To All Local Residents," 2007)

From this starting point, School T responded positively to the overtures of Blue Elementary and Green Elementary, resulting in a growing exchange with both. Further, in 2009, School T took the initiative and began participating in the executive committee of "Y Festa," a bustling festival with stalls, onstage performances, and other events, which gathers the people of Middle School District Y. Today, students, teaching staff, and students' guardians are lively contributors to the Festa, while bringing their unique presence to bear, including by selling *buchimgae* and *kimchi* and performing South Korean dances and *taekwondo* onstage.

4.3. Transformation

As contact and negotiation continued, each culture (native and nonnative) ceased to be fully independent and came to exist in a form that subsumed aspects of the other. This section describes the progressive transformations of educational practices and relationships between School T and Middle School District Y that occurred in the contact zone.

4.3.1. Transformations in Classroom Practices: Reinterpretation as Educational Resources

The exchange with School T begun in 2008 at Blue Elementary's instigation, gradually developing into an ongoing exchange whereby third- and fifth-grade students at Blue Elementary participated in School T's classes and activities twice a year. One teacher at Blue Elementary, discussed this:

> We weren't sure what would happen at first, so we stuck to tours of the school and things. Just going around after an introduction. But now we don't go as if it's an event, we think about what we can learn from the students and teachers at School T, and everyone thinks of the third- and fifth-graders going as part of the curriculum now.
>
> —Ōta, Blue Elementary teacher

It can be inferred from Ōta's description that the exchange with School T changed qualitatively as it became a part of Blue Elementary's curriculum. This change meant that the exchange with School T gradually came to occupy an accepted position as part of the Human rights and Dowa education that Blue Elementary had long been practicing:

> Under Middle School District Y's methods, students encounter [Dowa issues] through Human rights and Dowa education classes when they get to Brown Middle School.… The job of the elementary schools is to ensure that the children are intellectually prepared for that. That is one reason why, with that goal in mind, the exchange with School T is so important.… Blue Elementary's catchment area covers a *burakumin* area that has suffered discrimination, so of course we must study that, but now the school wants to make sure to present this as one of many human rights issues.… As the children become aware of various

> human rights issues, we want to provide them, at elementary school, with the ability to comment on how strange it is when they encounter various kinds of discrimination actually happening in their own community.
>
> —Kasai, Blue Elementary teacher

Middle School District Y has a continuing program of Human rights and Dowa education based on cooperation between its elementary and middle schools, to allow children to learn, step by step, about the *burakumin* discrimination that they may eventually confront themselves. Kasai reported that exchanges with School T played an important role in preparing the children of Blue Elementary to study issues of *burakumin* discrimination at Brown Middle School. Furthermore, the discussions of *burakumin* discrimination as one of many human rights issues enabled the dialogue to expand smoothly to cultivating a more universal sensitivity to human rights issues in general. This exchange with School T was taken up by Brown Middle School in 2011, through human rights studies fieldwork in first grade.

In addition, the exchanges between School T and Green Elementary that began as a part of "Multicultural Coexistence education" in 2009 developed into other exchanges between students and teaching staff. In addition to initiating visits of third- and fifth-graders to School T, as did Blue Elementary, Green Elementary began developing bilateral exchanges in 2010, with School T students participating in Green Elementary's classes, school events celebrating multiculturalism, and learning support through extracurricular Japanese lessons for children of foreign origin. Further, exchanges were carried out between teaching staff, with School T providing teacher training for Green Elementary, School T teaching staff participating in Green Elementary's history classes as instructors, and informal parties held for both groups of teaching staff.

Meanwhile, School T gradually positioned these exchanges as a concrete part of its classroom practices and ones based on its educational ideas. Specifically, their course named "Discourse on Multicultural Coexistence" was first offered as a year-long elective for third-year high school students in 2013; it covered issues surrounding the growing multiculturalism in Japan, South Korea, and the rest of the world. The "Community" module, a long segment of nine double-period classes dealing with local problems, brought together fieldwork on *burakumin* discrimination and educational issues for newcomers and long-term migrants, in cooperation with local residents, Blue Elementary, and Green Elementary. The course leader described what inspired "Discourse on Multicultural Coexistence" and the reasons for devoting so much time to the "Community" module:

> The ideals of "multicultural coexistence" and "human rights and peace" are universal ideals, but the way [School T] arrived at them is very much our own. In our unique position as Korean residents in Japan, we consider lessons for the future within our unique history

and inevitably end up running into these kinds of universal educational ideals.… Perhaps, I started "Discourse on Multicultural Coexistence" as part of the process to give opportunities for our students to realize these universal lessons in their own behavior and lives.

…. In the first year that we had classes about the community, there were a lot of things that the students hadn't heard before, after six years of attendance at our school. It became clear that it would be better to teach these things earlier.

—Won, School T teacher and course leader of "Discourse on Multicultural Coexistence"

In this way, exchange with the community was being woven into a variety of School T's classroom practices as an educational resource necessary for the realization of the school's educational ideals of "multicultural coexistence" and "human rights and peace."

As seen above, School T and the local schools viewed one another as educational resources, each absorbing the exchanges into their previous educational practices while ascribing various meanings to them, including "Human rights and Dowa education," "Multicultural Coexistence education," and "Discourse on Multicultural Coexistence." As they had been assigned these meanings, the exchanges between School T and the local schools expanded to be more continuous and further developed.

4.3.2. Transformations in the Parties: Children Connecting School T and the Community

The mutual transformations observed between School T and the local schools were not limited to classroom practices. As School T forged friendly ties with the local community, it became more appealing as a potential school choice for all children in Middle School District Y. Two students, Yuri and Kōta, were the pioneers, attending School T from Ward X beginning in 2012.

Yuri was born to parents born and bred in Ward X, but, due to a family move before she entered elementary school, she had attended elementary school outside the school district. When the family returned to Ward X before her progression to middle school, Yuri worried she would encounter roughness and bullying at Brown Middle School, where the family had planned to enroll her, and reported hoping to attend School T. Yuri's parents had longstanding, close relationships with other local residents and her younger brother attended Blue Elementary at the time of this study.

Kōta was also born and brought up by his single mother in Ward X, where he had been attending local kids' clubs with the district's children from a young age. In addition, he had attended Blue Elementary and had friends at Brown Middle School. Kōta had a South Korean grandmother; aware of his roots, he reported hoping to attend School T. Kōta's younger sister was attending Blue Elementary at the time of this study.

One teacher at School T indicated that the school's local community and the district's schools came to view School T very differently after Yuri and Kōta enrolled there, even

though they were the only two such students then:

> [Their attendance] was significant, as you might expect. Now we could say, "Look, local children are attending, too!" There are quite a lot of people who are surprised, who respond, "What? There are local [Japanese] children attending?" Yes, that is how it has been received.
>
> —Min, School T teacher

Min stated that the attendance of local children was a potent argument for changing people's perceptions of School T as something distinct from the education of local children. The change in people's attitudes toward School T was also suggested by the following teachers' accounts:

> [People associated with] Brown Middle School are starting to see [School T] differently too, and the floodgates have opened at Blue Elementary, so the existence of a school like School T will become totally normal in no time. In the end, even one student going there changes everything. Because now they have friends in both schools.
>
> —Matsuda, Green Elementary teacher

> Kōta's situation is significant for Blue Elementary. We are certainly closer [to School T].… For example, we went there for teacher training at the beginning of April.… I saw him then, introducing himself and showing our staff around the school with his head held high despite his embarrassment, and I thought, "Oh, he's grown up since going to School T."
>
> —Andō, Blue Elementary teacher

Matsuda likened Kōta's progression to School T as the "floodgates opening," indicating that, a precedent having been set, School T and the possibility of Japanese children enrolling there would cease to be remarkable. Further, the description given by Andō of Blue Elementary, who was sincerely delighted by Kōta's progress following his enrollment at School T, made it clear that, when it came to educating the local children, School T and Blue Elementary were beginning to bridge school divisions and ethnicities.

In addition, there were significant effects on Kōta's younger sister and Yuri's younger brother, both of whom were attending Blue Elementary, and their parents. For example, Yuri's mother became an important connector between School T and the local community in a variety of ways, including playing a central role in Parents' Association activities as a board member every year since Yuri enrolled at School T, as well as participating frequently in activities at Blue Elementary, which her younger son attended, and in Y Net activities as a local resident. School T began to be viewed by the community and the school district as less

removed—less "other"—thanks in large part to the enrollment of Yuri and Kōta, who had links to the community through a variety of networks, including friends and teachers from elementary school, siblings, and parents.

In January 2016, another student, whose parents and grandparents were long-time residents of Ward X, made plans to attend School T after graduating from Blue Elementary. That student would, like Yuri and Kōta, add a link between School T and the community and strengthen the relationship between them.

4.3.3. Emergence of New Conflicts and Strengthening Cooperation

However, the process of mutual transformation on both sides also comprised aspects other than the positive ones described above. Cultural practices in the contact zone underwent a process of negotiation among multiple cultures and were shaped by struggles for cultural legitimacy.

The conflicts that occurred between School T and Brown Middle School students between 2012 and 2013 were symbolic of this process. Multiple instances of group skirmishes and discriminatory graffiti painted in alleys and on school buildings were sparked by petty squabbles between South Korean students studying at School T and Brown Middle School students half-jokingly hanging around in front of School T. There were multiple reports of School T and Brown Middle School staff and nearby Ward X residents having to stop fighting between groups of students from Brown Middle School and School T in front of School T's gates. As confirmed in the previous section, Yuri and Kōta, who were attending School T from Ward X, played pivotal roles as intermediaries in School T's relationship with the community; however, they often bore the brunt of fighting between School T and Brown Middle School students. Teaching staff at Blue Elementary and Brown Middle School described the issues resulting from these clashes:

> Our previous exchanges hadn't solved everything…and when petty things led to trouble, the children fired off discriminatory phrases that they'd heard in the past.… I think there are still a lot of issues.… So, when we discussed the situation with teachers from the secondary school, I suggested that we might need to bring them into even more frequent contact.
>
> —Andō, Blue Elementary teacher

> There are children who went to School T from Blue Elementary and so there have been things that started semi-jokingly about them, shall we say, and turned into a bit of a fight.… There was also [discriminatory] graffiti on utility poles, probably by our children. That's why adults were saying we needed to properly understand with each other more.
>
> —Nomoto, Brown Middle School teacher

The accounts of Andō of Blue Elementary and Nomoto of Brown Middle School showed that these issues were considered problems to be dealt with by Blue Elementary and Brown Middle School, and that discussions took place among teaching staff at the elementary and middle schools, and within the middle school faculty, regarding the need to promote better understanding through further exchanges. These discussions were reportedly not limited to individual teachers; the issue was treated as a problem for the full school district in talks led by committee members following a Y Net meeting. Looking back on this series of events, one teacher reflected that, while the confrontations between students were a severe problem necessitating a community-wide solution, they at least served to raise consciousness among the adults and make them aware of their responsibilities, and this strengthened their solidarity with a view to ongoing cooperation:

> Last year, we had pretty huge graffiti on this school building, below the office [.... Was it made by students from Brown Middle School?] I'm not sure. When the police came running when we reported the damage, the teachers and the principal and the vice-principal from Brown Middle School came running, too—now that aspect was great.… I think that kind of cooperation, that kind of relationship—like recognizing people at Y Festa—has been important in the long run.… You know, being able to cooperate at that kind of low point, working with the teachers at Brown Middle School, with the community, and so on.
>
> —Sim, School T teacher

The altercations between students, as well as Kōta and Yuri being targeted, were partially caused by School T becoming a more known quantity. However, as related by Sim of School T, the clashes did not only give rise to rifts and disagreement but also spurred awareness and awakened responsibility in local adults, strengthening solidarity toward ongoing cooperation. The relationships built up through various exchanges formed the backdrop of these developments; as Sim reflected, "that kind of relationship—like recognizing people at Y Festa—has been important." This dovetailed with the new conflicts arising between School T and the district's schools: the exchanges between them evolved, and the dynamic of cooperation geared toward problem-solving, based on previously constructed relationships, was further strengthened by adults in the community as a result. This suggests that the relationship-building and educational practices of School T and the district's schools were emerging amid complex and cyclical developments.

4.3.4. Creation and Implementation of a High School Entrance System

As their relationships deepened through both connection and conflict, School T and the local schools initiated an even greater change. In 2014, seven years after it was established, School T announced the creation of a "local referrals framework" that established preferential

enrollment and costs at School T for graduates of Brown Middle School.

> [We have] referrals from Brown Middle School. We set that up, too, so if a student wishes to attend, we will waive part of the fee.… We warmly welcome Japanese students, and particularly local students, as can be seen from our creation of this referral framework for Brown Middle School. I think that this will really help with establishing friendly relations with the local community, too.
>
> —Min, School T teacher

At Brown Middle School, where approximately 40% of students received financial support to attend school, many of the children were in difficult economic situations. The "local referrals framework" proposed to Brown Middle School by School T was an effort that combined acquiring students with further community relationship-building. Offering preferential entrance measures for graduates of Brown Middle School, such as partially waiving fees, opened School T to a wider pool of students, regardless of financial situation. Min's description confirmed that the measure was intended to build firmer ties with the community and secure the position of the school through attracting local students. The "local referrals framework" was able to be developed because of the relationship School T had previously built with Middle School District Y; it can be interpreted as forming a new foundation for further changes to the school's relationship with the local community. The referral system was implemented in the winter of 2015, and the first referred student enrolled in 2016.

In this way, significant change, in the form of the creation and implementation of a high school entrance system, was brought about through the development of mutual transformation of School T and the district's public schools.

5. Backdrop to the "Process of Mutual Transformation"

This paper has so far described the process of mutual transformation of School T and the district's public schools from the perspective of the contact zone. This last section discusses the background to the above developments.

5.1. Local Characteristics of Inclusivity and the School District's Educational Organization

A teacher who promoted the exchanges with Middle School District Y described the backdrop to the process:

> There were already teachers in the area who were aware of the issues and knew that we had to deal with them in an active way.… In terms of sides, we were the ones who were

approached. And I then put that into practice.

—Won, School T teacher

As discussed in Section 3, Middle School District Y had a district-wide history of involvement in Human rights and Dowa education since the 1970s. Further, it maintained a multilayered educational network and set of practices based on measures carried out by the prefecture—namely, schemes implemented in the 1990s to build relationships among schools, households, and communities, chiefly targeting middle school districts covering burakumin areas, and the Community Education Councils formed in 2000. The Community Education Council (Y Net) became the principal foundation of Middle School District Y's educational practices, as explained by a teacher at Brown Middle School and the council's director:

In the end, we always want to do something for the children that we see having a hard time.. since there has been discrimination against *burakumin* or the children of foreign origin…so that was the original basis, and it continues today under the name of "Y Net."

—Nomoto, Brown Middle School teacher and director of Y Net

Y Net was based on the theoretical framework of the "educational community" (Ikeda, 2005), which had the empowerment of "socially disadvantaged groups" at its core (Ikeda, 2005, p. 5). As Nomoto's description suggests, this value became a pillar of the educational practices in Middle School District Y, continuing in today's Y Net. School T gradually gained membership in Y Net by participating in various Y Net activities, starting with the school district's festival, and currently it participates in the "Promotion Committee Meeting," held twice a year to discuss such issues as the organization's direction. Sim of School T reflected that this participation in various Y Net activities presented important opportunities to change School T's relationship with the community. In this way, the local characteristic of inclusivity, built up historically throughout the district from the 1970s to the present, and the existence of Y Net, the school district's local educational organization, underpinned by such values, played an important role in the development of exchanges between School T and the district's schools.

5.2. Proactivity of School T: Pursuit of Educational Ideals Within Structural Constraints

The attitude of School T in actively seeking to build links with the local community also played an important role in starting the exchanges between the schools. As mentioned earlier, a leaflet that School T delivered to all households in Ward X at the time of the opposition movement made it clear that School T hoped to forge friendly ties with the community, both as a realization of the school's educational ideals and as a means to overcome the difficult circumstances surrounding its survival. Community understanding was of vital importance for

School T:

> For School T to survive, a critical point was that we have to obtain the understanding of the surrounding community. [So you mean, the exchange with the community was something essential for your school]….For sure. School T is a small school, and if the community turned their back on us, we would be powerless.… So, it's very important. Going forward, as well. For example, we wouldn't even be able to rent a gymnasium and run gym class.
>
> —Won, School T teacher

Many teachers and students at School T viewed building friendly relations with the local community as a critical issue of absolute necessity for running the school and educational activities, including construction and maintenance of school buildings. Difficult political and financial circumstances also played a part, and this critical issue had further significance in terms of minimizing the potentially destructive impacts of unstable national relations between Japan and North and South Korea (Sano, 2014). Furthermore, as of January 2016, School T still did not have a gymnasium or sports field due to financial limitations caused by its status as a miscellaneous school, and it had to use facilities run by the school district and the gymnasiums and sports fields of the public elementary and middle schools for most of its functions, including daily gym classes and graduation ceremonies. As a result, friendly relations became indispensable for obtaining the resources needed for daily educational activities. In addition, importance was attached to the local students' attendance, made possible by positive connections, as realizing the school's educational ideals and helping to ensure its continued operations.

> If we had 300 students, we could manage ourselves, administratively and financially, and increase student activities. It's that kind of thing, so that's all the scale that we're looking for. That's also why we want local students.…If we just had that many students, I think our relationship of coexistence with the local community would be much more stable.
>
> —Min, School T teacher

Min's description made it clear that securing the attendance of local students was seen as a means of freeing the school from difficult economic circumstances, realizing the school's educational ideals, and furthering relationship-building with the local community.

Certain structural limitations necessarily faced by gaikokujin-gakkos were among the factors that appear to have contributed to School T's attitudes toward the local community, including the protest movement before the school's opening, the negative impacts of unstable international relations, and the financial difficulties caused by its status as a miscellaneous school. However, School T's positioning of its exchanges with the community as a resource

necessary for the realization of its educational ideals of "multicultural coexistence" and "human rights and peace" was apparent in its institution of its "Discourse on Multicultural Coexistence" and the large proportion of that course being dedicated to the study of community. Furthermore, following discussions among curriculum planners, in 2015 "Discourse on Multicultural Studies" was changed from an elective in the third year of high school to a required class for all students in the two preceding years. Thus, School T's attitude can be understood as the strategic response of an "agent" (Giroux, 1992, pp. 27–28) positioning exchanges with the local community as a resource to enrich its own educational practices and as a realization of its educational ideals within its structural limitations—rather than as a merely passive response to those limitations.

6. Discussion and Conclusion

The conclusions drawn from these case studies are summarized in Figure 1. School T and the district's public schools encountered one another under circumstances of asymmetrical power relations, dictated in part by reactions to the protest movement and its attendant educational issues (Section 4.1.). Both were subjectivized and began an exchange as they reconsidered their existing educational practices (Section 4.2.). Classroom practices were then shaped as each school came to consider the other an educational resource and their educational practices began to overlap (Section 4.3.1.). The schools' relationship was also transformed by the first local (Japanese) children's enrolling at School T (Section 4.3.2.). Meanwhile, although new conflicts arose between School T and local children, these provided opportunities for positive developments, including problem-solving and strengthening cooperation among local adults (Section 4.3.3.). Moreover, deepening relationships were accompanied by a profound transformation in the form of the creation and implementation of a new high school entrance system to encourage locals' enrollment (Section 4.3.4.). The school district's local educational organization, which prioritized empowerment of socially disadvantaged groups (Section 5.1.), and the proactivity of School T in actively pursuing relationship-building with the local community to realize its educational ideals despite the constraints of its structural disadvantage were both important contributing background factors (Section 5.2.).

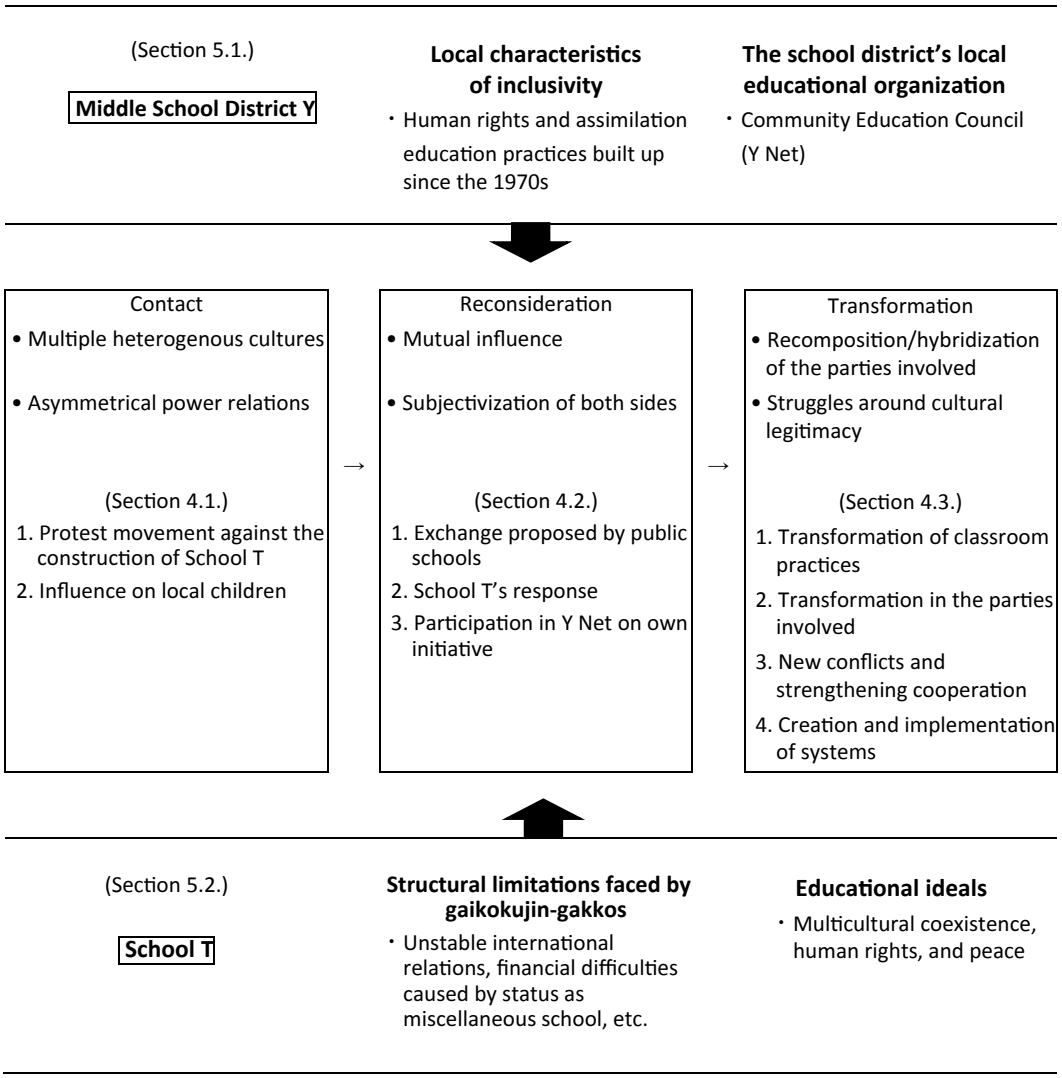

Figure 1 *Process of Mutual Transformation in the Contact Zone*

Many previous studies—from a macro perspective and based on schemata that posit a majority versus a minority, Japanese society as unchanging, and gaikokujin-gakkos as transformations—have postulated the necessity of legal safeguards for gaikokujin-gakkos but have not fully captured the lived, local, day-to-day of gaikokujin-gakkos. In contrast, this study examined the contact between a gaikokujin-gakko and its local Japanese public schools from a micro–local perspective to reveal the new educational issues that emerged, revealing how mutual transformation can be observed on various levels, including in the classroom, through the parties involved and their systems.

Today's increasingly fluid and complex local communities are contact zones where, burdened by asymmetrical power relations, various people of different cultural backgrounds

intermingle. In sharing local communities, school districts' public schools and gaikokujin-gakkos undergo a variety of changes, and both must situationally evolve the education they provide in response to this context. The picture that emerged through this case study depicts one gaikokujin-gakko and its district's public schools responding not passively but actively, expanding and developing their educational practices as they reconsidered existing practices and came to view one another as mutual educational resources, despite the constraints of their situation and rigid structural limitations. The theoretical implication is that it is important to discuss gaikokujin-gakkos not only as vulnerable entities from a macro perspective or within the limited framework of the "school," but also with clarification from everyday experiences from a micro–local perspective: the consideration of gaikokujin-gakkos as local schools. Understanding the mutual transformation process among the schools that entailed the development of their practices toward the common goal of the "realization of social inclusion" (Shiobara, 2011, p. 18), as observed in this paper, may help empower gaikokujin-gakkos without drawing backlash but instead promoting them as resources for the cultivation of a rich educational environment in school districts.

Furthermore, these observations have implications for designing policy and support adapted to local realities, from the viewpoint that gaikokujin-gakkos should be seen as another form of local schools, rather than creating policies—such as providing grants and exemptions to the policy of free high school education—that react to international relations and ignore situational realities. Further study is needed of the means of support that would enhance the kinds of interschool exchanges observed in this case study. Moreover, there are also issues related to the reorganization of the legal system that sets gaikokujin-gakkos apart at the local level; for example, in this case, the attendance of Japanese children at the gaikokujin-gakko was possible thanks to positive relationship-building with the community, but the system might legally classify this as "unauthorized absence from compulsory education." Additional accumulation of information from a micro–local perspective is needed to understand and resolve the reality of related legal issues.

Finally, this study revealed that the school district's local educational organization, linked to the practice of Human rights and Dowa education over many years, played an important role in the establishing of interschool exchanges, including with the gaikokujin-gakko. It has long been signaled that research into the subject of local community and education is stagnating in Japan (Takada, 2008). However, further case studies of potential structures and activities (including new educational bodies beyond Japanese public schools) and elucidation of the functions of the kind of local educational organization described in this paper are important for the development of an inclusive and "self-repairing" foundation of education in Japan's increasingly diverse local communities.

Future research should address the following two issues. First, to more deeply understand the realities of contact zones and the various dynamics at work, researchers must continue

analysis while expanding current schemata into multilayered frameworks that encompass local residents, students' guardians and other actors. A related issue is that research must examine the phenomena overlooked under the development paradigm of "contact–reconsideration–transformation"; aspects that do not tie in with "contact" or "transformation" are often neglected in analyses of contributing factors. Second, through conducting other case studies in different schools and the surrounding areas, the different conditions of contact experienced by each subject due to the characteristics such as ethnicity, social class, and local historical background should be revealed. Close analysis, in line with the case studies, of questions such as how gaikokujin-gakkos and local communities are shaping their educational and social practices by exerting influence over one another, may become important in reconsidering the position of gaikokujin-gakkos in Japanese society and, by extension, the creation of a multicultural convivial society.

Acknowledgement

This paper was supported by JSPS KAKENHI Grant (Grant-in-Aid for JSPS Fellows) Number JP 15J00449.

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